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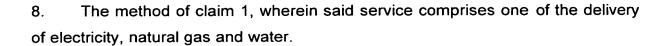
## WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:

1. A settlement method, comprising:

identifying each of a plurality of service providers operating to provide a service to a user in exchange for a fee debited from an account associated with said user;

apportioning said fee to said identified service providers; and crediting respective service provider accounts with respective portions of said fee.

- 2. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of apportioning is adapted in response to changes in said provided service.
- 3. The method of claim 1, wherein said service comprises a telecommunications service supported by a plurality of service providers.
- 4. The method of claim 3, wherein said service includes a bridge service provided by a telecom platform service provider.
- 15 5. The method of claim 4, wherein said service includes a bridge service provided by an internet service provider.
  - 6. The method of claim 1, wherein said service comprises a video-on-demand (VOD) service.
- 7. The method of claim 6, wherein said service includes services associated with content request and services associated with content delivery.



- 9. The method of claim 8, wherein said delivery service includes services provided by source and distribution service providers.
- 5 10. The method of claim 1, wherein portions of said fee are debited from respective accounts associated with more than one user.
  - 11. The method of claim 1, wherein said service is provided to a plurality of users, and wherein said service fee is allocated among said plurality of users according to the proportional cost of providing said service to each user.
- 12. The method of claim 1, wherein said service is provided to a plurality of users, and wherein said service fee is allocated among said plurality of users according to a least cost determination based on service level agreements between at least one of said users and said service providers.
  - 13. The method of claim 11, wherein at least one of said plurality of users does not contribute to said service fee.
  - 14. The method of claim 1, wherein at least one of said service providers is selected according to a service level agreement (SLA) between said at least one service provider and said user.
- 15. The method of claim 1, wherein said step of apportioning comprises the steps of:

measuring services provided to said user by said service providers; and determining, for each of said measured services, a portion of said fee associated with said measured services.

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## 16. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

selecting each of said plurality of service providers to provide said service to said user.

- 17. The method of claim 16, wherein those service providers having service level agreements with said user are selected to provide respective service portions.
  - 18. The method of claim 16, wherein those service providers operating together to provide a lowest total cost for said service are selected.
  - The method of claim 1, further comprising:
    monitoring said services provided to said user;

determining whether a value of said user account is sufficient to pay a presently accrued fee; and

in the case of said account value being insufficient, terminating said service to said user.

20. The method of claim 19, further comprising:

prior to said service termination, offering said user an opportunity to provide additional value such that said provided service may be continued.

21. The method of claim 1, further comprising:

monitoring said services provided to said user;

determining whether a value of said user account is sufficient to pay a presently accrued fee; and

in the case of said account value being insufficient, retrieving value from an alternate account associated with said user.

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22. A computer readable medium having computer executable instructions for performing steps, comprising:

identifying each of a plurality of service providers operating to provide a service to a user in exchange for a fee debited from an account associated with said user;

apportioning said fee to said identified service providers; and crediting respective service provider accounts with respective portions of said fee.

## 23. A system, comprising:

a service platform, for providing a service to a customer using a plurality of service providers;

a service measurement and settlement agent (SMSA), for measuring portions of said provided service associated with respective service providers, apportioning a fee to each of said service providers and crediting respective service provider accounts with respective portions of said fee.

- 24. The system of claim 23, wherein said SMSA operates to select service providers used to provide said service to said customer.
- 25. The system of claim 24, wherein said SMSA selects those service providers which together provide said service at a lowest cost to said customer.
- 26. The system of claim 24, wherein said SMSA selects service providers based upon payments made to said SMSA.
  - 27. The system of claim 24, wherein said SMSA selects service providers based upon service level agreements between said customer and said selected service providers.